

TRECIA Jumps Into History



Like Deon Hemmings on the track, triple jumper Trecia-Kaye Smith holds a unique place in Jamaica's athletics history. On August 7, 2005 at the World Championships in Helsinki, Finland, the Westmoreland born virtuoso became the first Jamaican woman to win a global title in a field event. She achieved that honour despite adversity and opened the door to a new era.

She banged her left ankle early in the contest and was only fourth after the first three rounds of the final. "I hurt my ankle on my second jump and it hurt even more on the third, I just had to collect myself and be tough", she told reporters afterwards. Her focus put her in the lead in round four with a jump taped to 14.91 metres. Despite the pain, she pushed out to 15.11 in round

five to match the world leading mark set earlier in the year by injured Russian Tatyana Lebedeva before closing with 15.01 metres.

No one else exceeded 15 metres in 2005.

The Mannings School and University of Pittsburgh heroine had come to Helsinki as a possible winner and she did not falter. "I did expect to get my season's best here, though. I saw the gold medal coming all the time", she revealed.

Smith hobbled to the podium with a walking stick, accompanied by silver medallist Yargelis Savigne of Cuba and bronze medallist Anna Pyatykh of Russia. In addition to making a breakthrough in the field events, the triple jump ace was just the second Jamaican woman to win a World title following sprint great Merlene Ottey.

Fast enough to anchor the 4x100 metres relay team at the Mannings School and versatile enough to try the heptathlon, Smith set a national record of 15.16 metres in 2004. A close fourth that year in the first of her three Olympic finals, the now retired Smith also won the 2006 and 2010 Commonwealth Games titles and 7 national championships.

In addition, Trecia won 7 NCAA titles during her time at the University of Pittsburgh. Five of them came in the long jump, in which her personal best is 6.74 metres, and two in the triple.

Her legacy is ably carried on today. Kimberly Williams jumped away with the 2014 and 2018 Commonwealth gold medals and a 2018 World Indoor silver, while Shanieka Ricketts was second at last year's Doha World Championships, with Williams fourth.

Like all of us, they have Trecia to thank for making history on August 7, 2005.

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